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DEPARTMENT FOR S/GC AND EUR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [HU](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR FRIED'S GUANTANAMO DETAINEE MEETINGS IN  
HUNGARY

REF: BUDAPEST 270 AND EARLIER

Classified By: Acting P/E Counselor Jon Martinson, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Special Envoy (S/GC) for the Closure of Guantanamo Bay Detention Facilities Ambassador Dan Fried met with Hungarian government officials and major political party leaders June 18 to discuss Hungary's willingness to accept Guantanamo detainees. MFA Senior State Secretary Vilmos Szabo said Hungary's position has not changed: "We are ready and open to consider accepting detainees" but only with four-party consensus. Follow-on meetings with both opposition FIDESZ party and governing Socialist leaders indicates that four-party consensus may be difficult to achieve. End summary.

¶2. (C) Meeting first with MFA Senior State Secretary Vilmos Szabo, Ambassador Fried expressed appreciation for Hungary's willingness to consider accepting some number of detainees, commenting that he would be providing information on three detainees during his visit. Szabo said that the current Hungarian government is ready and open to assist the USG in relocating detainees, commenting that the GOH supported the effort to develop a favorable EU-U.S. policy on the issue during discussions in Brussels. Stating that political consensus would be needed to accept detainees, Szabo said that "FIDESZ is a problem, they are basically against it." Continuing, Szabo said that the government would have to "make a strong argument to accept detainees...without FIDESZ that won't be possible."

¶3. (C) In a follow-on meeting, MFA State Secretary Laszlo Varkonyi told Ambassador Fried that Hungary's "position has not changed, we are ready and open to the possibility," stating that the EU had come up with the right approach in the joint EU-U.S. policy statement. Ambassador Fried provided dossiers on three detainees, noting that these individuals were low-level marginal players - not saints - but not hardened terrorists. The S/GA explained that follow-up requests for more information would be handled via established Hungary-U.S. intelligence channels. He also noted that a visit to Guantanamo to interview detainees is possible, stating that Hungary would not have to make a final commitment until after such interviews.

¶4. (C) Varkonyi, accepting three dossiers of Egyptian and Palestinian detainees, commented that for Hungary "nationality matters," and this was the reason the GOH earlier expressed interest in Uzbek and Somali detainees (reftel), as they posed the least risk in bi-lateral relations. Continuing, Varkonyi said the Egyptian and Palestinian dossiers need a different approach, and he will

forward the files to the intelligence services for their review. Varkonyi reiterated that the GOH is ready and open to move forward, but with Hungarian national elections coming soon, underscored to Ambassador Fried that "you have more work to do here than we do" to convince the opposition FIDESZ to support the government's position. Varkonyi asked for follow-up briefings on Ambassador Fried's consultations with the political parties, which we will do on June 30.

15. (C) Responding, Ambassador Fried noted that he will meet with FIDESZ representatives during his visit, noting that with the EU joint policy, and Spain, Italy, France and Portugal indicating they would accept a certain number of detainees, the decision for Hungary would probably become easier. Varkonyi said that Hungary knows it is in good company, and "we take this on as a human rights issue, which is part of Hungary's foreign policy agenda." However, he reiterated that the Government wants to keep the issue low key due to political implications, and the government "wants to achieve political party consensus."

16. (C) Meeting with FIDESZ MP Mihaly Balla and Foreign Policy Advisor Karoly Dan, Ambassador Fried outlined the USG request to the GOH. Noting the success of the extreme-right Jobbik party in the recent European parliamentary elections, Balla said this complicates the Hungarian political landscape, in particular on the key issue of public security. Highlighting Jobbik's 15 percent support in the election, in particular from the 18-28 year old age group, Balla said that cooperating on detainees could make FIDESZ a target of the extreme right." This is a concern for the political elite since Jobbik would campaign against FIDESZ to attract

voters." Stating that the detainee question is "complicated," Balla commented that the Government wants a four-party consensus, but "the problem is they only send the message via the press - and we are still waiting for their position on the issue." Dan made it clear that it is important "that the government has to talk to us, not via an unhealthy triangle." Noting that most of the senior party's foreign policy leadership was currently away from Budapest, Balla said he would pass Ambassador Fried's message to them as soon as possible.

17. (C) In a final meeting with Attila Mesterhazy, Socialist Party vice-president and Parliamentary faction leader, Ambassador Fried, acknowledging the current Hungarian political climate, requested Hungary's help to meet President Obama's commitment to close Guantanamo by January 2010. Mesterhazy raised Schengen zone concerns, noting that neighboring Austria and Slovakia have said no to accepting detainees. Ambassador Fried referenced the EU-U.S. common position and available information sharing arrangements to help monitor or track detainee movements, noting each country can determine how they would address this issue. Noting that accepting detainees would be an issue before national elections, Mesterhazy asked "what is the reward, what is the advantage to Hungary?" Responding, Ambassador Fried suggested that allies and friends should help each other for the "common good." He noted that the U.S. gained a good friend and ally in NATO and other fora following the 1990 political changes and "we are asking for your help." In closing, Mesterhazy said that the government will have to make the decision quickly, either before the summer break, or in early September, because of the upcoming national elections currently scheduled for the Spring 2010.

18. (C) Comment. Ambassador Fried's three meetings reconfirmed Post's analysis of the state-of-play in Hungary on the detainee issue. The Government remains willing to consider accepting no more than two detainees, but the nationalities of the remaining detainees presents an additional obstacle. However, the greater challenge will be the Government's effort to reach four-party consensus to accept any detainees. Senior FIDESZ party members continue to speak out in opposition to the proposal, underscored in a letter from Party President Viktor Orban to Ambassador Foley

prior to her departure. Orban's letter reflects FIDESZ's concern with the extreme-right Jobbik party's attraction to FIDESZ's historical voting base - a concern growing even stronger with Jobbik's surprising success in the recent EP elections. Without FIDESZ support, the chance for a positive decision by the GOH diminishes greatly.

19. (U) Ambassador Fried cleared this cable.  
Levine